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UNICEF strategic framework for partnerships and collaborative relationships

Summary

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2007/1, UNICEF has prepared this report on UNICEF partnerships and collaborative relationships. An accompanying document (E/ICEF/2009/11) contains a mapping of the organization's current engagements with partners.

The purpose of the UNICEF strategic framework for partnerships and collaborative relationships is to outline the future approach of UNICEF in a consistent and strategic way and to ensure that partnerships and collaborative relationships contribute to the best results for children and promote their rights. The framework also analyses the organization's current engagements, aiming to foster a common institutional understanding of what partnerships and collaborative relationships are, which modalities they can take, how they contribute to positive outcomes for children, and how UNICEF responds to the opportunities and challenges they present.

The strategic framework and the accompanying mapping document focus on the engagement of UNICEF in Global Programme Partnerships and with civil society organizations, the corporate sector and other entities, such as the media and knowledge institutions. The documents include neither a full overview of all modes of cooperation with other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes nor a full account of the relationship of UNICEF with Governments.

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The documents build on evaluations and reviews of UNICEF engagement in Global Programme Partnerships and with civil society and the corporate sector. Extensive consultations have been conducted with the Executive Board, country offices, regional offices, various headquarters divisions and offices, and National Committees for UNICEF, as well as with children and youth and external experts represented in the project's Sounding Board.

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I. Rationale

1. UNICEF believes that partnerships and collaborative relationships are critical to deliver results for children and to realize their rights. Since its inception, the organization has worked with a broad range of partners all over the world in order to achieve such outcomes. These partnerships and collaborative relationships are established and implemented at a global, multi-country and country level. UNICEF works for example with Governments to develop and implement child-focused programmes and policies; with civil society organisations (CSOs)[1] to advocate for policy change and to deliver services for children; with the corporate sector[2] to mobilize resources and to promote child- and women-friendly business and marketing practices; with the media to raise public awareness about children's issues; and with knowledge partners such as universities and think tanks to strengthen the evidence base for programmes and advocacy activities. Moreover, UNICEF engages in Global Programme Partnerships (GPPs)[3] with other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes as well as public and non-public partners to develop a joint response to issues affecting children. UNICEF and its National Committees work together to support the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

2. UNICEF has been a pioneer among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in working with partners to achieve results for children. Despite this track record, the relationships of UNICEF often remain ad hoc in nature. In relation to GPPs, a more systematic approach is needed to decide when to engage in and disengage from partnerships. A more coherent overview of the organization's relationships with CSOs would contribute to a more strategic approach. Moreover, UNICEF has not yet explored the full potential of partnerships and collaborative relationships with the corporate sector.

3. At the same time, the international landscape of development partnerships has evolved significantly over the past decades. There is an international consensus today that partnerships with public and non-public actors are crucial for achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. To adapt to these developments and to explore the full potential of working with others for children, UNICEF needs to adopt a more strategic approach to partnerships and collaborative relationships.

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[1] The term "civil society" refers to the sphere of autonomous associations that are independent of the public and for-profit sectors and designed to advance collective interests and ideas. Civil society organizations include, for example, international and national non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, civic movements and advocacy groups, trade unions, faith-based organizations and professional voluntary associations.

[2] In this document, the term "corporate sector" is used to cover all types of business enterprises, including small and medium-size firms as well as large national and international companies.

[3] GPPs are defined as voluntary and collaborative relationships that reach an explicit agreement at the global level on programmatic objectives that are relevant to the promotion and protection of children's rights and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals; have a programmatic focus that extends across more than one region of the world; involve multiple public and non-public stakeholders, who are actively engaged in the partnerships and programmatic decision-making at the global level; and establish formal or informal modalities of cooperation to meet these objectives in a medium- or long-term framework.

4. Responding to the request of the Executive Board (decision 2007/1), UNICEF has conducted an analysis of its involvement in partnerships and collaborative relationships. This includes an evaluation of UNICEF engagement in GPPs, a review of its partnerships with CSOs, a survey among UNICEF corporate partners, as well as consultations with external and internal stakeholders.[4] The strategic framework for partnerships and collaborative relationships reviews experiences and lessons learned to date, sets a vision and objectives, describes the way forward, defines guiding principles and operational guidelines, and calls for new monitoring and evaluation tools.

II. Context

5. Important progress has been made in human development over the past decades, providing children with improved opportunities to develop to their full potential. Concerted efforts have led to remarkable successes in the fight against some communicable diseases, and more children are in school than ever before. Laws and social policy mechanisms have been strengthened, improving children's protection from violence and abuse. New ways of working together and innovation and technology provide unprecedented opportunities to bring about sustainable improvements in children's development opportunities.

6. However, the world is also confronted with a number of pressing challenges, and new ones are evolving. Poverty and hunger continue to affect families in large numbers and threaten children's chances of survival and development. Dangerous diseases continue to spread, and millions of children are still deprived of their right to a quality education. Climate change and environmental degradation increasingly endanger human habitats, limiting the availability of fresh water and undermining efforts to improve food security. Human rights violations, instability and conflict are affecting many societies. These developments have a potentially devastating impact on children.

7. The international community has been struggling to cope with these challenges. Designing effective responses requires the concerted effort of many actors, as well as specialized information and know-how. Public donors have not been able to provide sufficient resources for tackling these problems, and the current economic crisis is likely to increase the strains on public budgets. Aid provided by members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has fallen short of predicted rates of increase (especially if considered without debt relief), though assistance by

[4] "Evaluation of UNICEF's Engagement in Global Programme Partnerships" (UNICEF Evaluation Office, 2009); "Mapping UNICEF Engagement in Global Programme Partnerships" (UNICEF Programme Partnerships Unit, 2008); "Review of UNICEF's Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations" (Bernard and Kuruvilla, 2006); "2008 Global Review of UNICEF's Corporate Alliances" (OTF Group, 2008); "Realising the Potential. Mobilising and Maximising the Corporate Contribution to UNICEF's Mission" (The Partnering Initiative, 2007); "Enhancing the Dialogue between UNICEF and NGOs in Humanitarian Action — Report on the consultation" (UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, 2008); consultations through workshops, interviews and online surveys with UNICEF country offices in all geographical regions, programme units, National Committees, CSO partners, youth, and external experts represented in the project Sounding Board.

non-DAC countries, as well as foreign direct investments and private remittances, saw a significant increase over the past decade.

8. Confronted with these pressures, and acknowledging that they cannot be resolved alone, public actors have increasingly recognized the potential benefits of working with non-public actors. Most United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, multilateral development banks and many bilateral donors have become more open to, and more proactive in, seeking cooperation with business actors, philanthropic foundations, CSOs and knowledge institutions. The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 was the first United Nations conference to officially recognize the important role of actors such as women, youth, business and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others in achieving sustainable development. The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002 acknowledged partnerships with non-public actors as an official outcome of the meeting. The contribution of partnerships to aid effectiveness and the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, has also been highlighted in the 2008 report of the MDG Gap Task Force, the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and the 2002 Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development.

9. At the same time, non-public actors have become more willing to collaborate in the pursuit of development goals. Companies increasingly recognize the need to make a difference by improving basic services and investing in infrastructure. Business actors are making important contributions by creating innovative technologies, products and business models to address social challenges, all of which has brought them closer to the mission of development organizations. Foundations have strengthened their focus on international development, and CSOs are more frequently participating in political processes and working with the corporate sector. Overall, these developments have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of partnerships over the last 10 to 15 years. As a result, non-public actors and GPPs have become an important part of the development architecture. Within this changed development landscape, the United Nations has undergone significant reforms and increasingly emphasizes its normative, convening and coordinating roles.

10. The Convention on the Rights of the Child constitutes the mandate and main guiding document for UNICEF, providing the basis for programming around children's needs and relationships with partners. The Convention is also a powerful instrument to promote policy change through advocacy campaigns with partners, including children and young people, and women's and youth groups.

11. Because of its longstanding engagement with many partners, UNICEF has been recognized as a leader among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on partnerships. A 2005 report found that UNICEF was "probably the most advanced of all United Nations organizations in integrating partnerships into its core activities."[5] The organization's medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) 2006-2013, as well as the midterm review of the MTSP (E/ICEF/2008/18, E/ICEF/2008/19 and E/ICEF/2008/25), highlight the crucial role of partnerships and collaborative

[5] "Business UNusual: Facilitating United Nations Reform through Partnerships" (Witte and Reinicke, 2005), p. 64.

relationships for realizing children's and women's rights and achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

III. Mapping of UNICEF current partnerships and collaborative relationships

12. Partnerships are "voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits".[6] UNICEF engages in a broad range of partnerships (based on a written agreement and which may involve the exchange of resources) and collaborative relationships (based on an informal agreement and not involving transfer of resources), with many of them evolving over time. Some relationships start as or develop into formal partnerships; others remain informal. Partnerships and collaborative relationships are distinct from commercial contractual arrangements regulating the delivery of services or the provision of goods.

13. This strategic framework covers UNICEF engagement in GPPs as well as its partnerships and collaborative relationships with CSOs, the corporate sector and other entities such as the media and knowledge institutions. An accompanying mapping document (E/ICEF/2009/11) presents concrete examples of UNICEF engagements, and reviews how different groups contribute to achieving UNICEF priorities as outlined in the MTSP. Both documents also cover partnerships and collaborative relationships initiated and managed by UNICEF National Committees. In their fundraising and advocacy activities, National Committees engage with a variety of partners from the corporate sector, civil society and other sectors, which form an important part of the UNICEF network of partnerships and collaborative relationships. UNICEF also works with a number of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the different MTSP focus areas, both in the field and globally, building on the complementarity of the organizations' normative and operational mandates, be they in emergencies or in the development arena. A full outline of this cooperation is not possible within the limits of this strategic framework. Such collaborations are mainly considered in the context of GPPs, which usually involve different United Nations agencies, funds or programmes and are a valuable instrument for enhancing United Nations collaboration with partners on issues related to global public goods.[7] UNICEF is strongly committed to the United Nations coherence process, recently approved its action plan on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and has been an active player in all One UN pilot countries. Collaborations with other United Nations agencies are further addressed in other documents such as the MTSP and country programme documents. The same applies

[6] This definition of partnerships was stressed by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 62/211 of 19 December 2007.

[7] "Public goods" are goods that produce benefits that are non-rival (many people can consume, use, or enjoy the good at the same time) and non-excludable (it is difficult to prevent people who do not pay for the good from consuming it). If the benefits of a particular public good accrue across all or many countries, then the good is deemed a global or international public good, such as for example the mitigation of climate change or the development of new vaccines.

to the relationship of UNICEF with Governments, which therefore is not covered by this strategic framework.

14. UNICEF engagement in partnerships and collaborative relationships is very diverse. The organization is currently an official partner in 80 GPPs and has a governance role in 35 of them. UNICEF roles in GPPs are multifaceted. At times, UNICEF plays the role of an observer; at other times, that of a convener. In its convening role, UNICEF provides policy expertise and strategic information, coordinates advocacy campaigns, provides procurement services, helps with resource mobilization and in-country technical assistance and receives funds to implement specific projects. Most UNICEF country offices, and regional and headquarters offices, engage with CSOs in various ways on programme delivery and advocacy. These CSOs include international and national NGOs, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, children and young people, and women's and youth groups. UNICEF does not have a central tracking system that can gauge the total number of CSO partners at any level. The same applies to its collaboration with the corporate sector. Nevertheless, for the corporate survey conducted in 2008, UNICEF offices and National Committees identified 628 companies worldwide that collaborate with UNICEF.

15. The graph below summarizes the main functions and outcomes of UNICEF collaboration with these partners.

CSO
• Implementing programmes
• Generating technical knowledge and innovative practices
• Preparing for and responding to emergencies
• Advocating for children's rights and engaging in policy dialogue
• Facilitating the participation of children and young people
• Supporting the development of an active civil society
Knowledge partners & media
• Generate data, information and knowledge concerning children
• Develop standards and ideas for improving the situation of children
• Advocate for children's rights
• Create platforms for child participation
Outcomes for Children
GPP
• Harnessing multiple stakeholder partnerships to shape the international response to major development challenges
• Developing new products
• Harmonizing policies
• Creating and disseminating knowledge
• Supporting national policy, institutional reforms, and capacity building
• Expanding country level systems and services to deliver global or national public goods through innovative financing mechanisms
• Learning
Corporate partners
• Mobilising resources
• Promoting corporate social responsibility
• Co-developing strategic partnerships
• Collaborating for solutions
• Facilitating third-party action
• Generating innovations for children
• Developing UNICEF's institutional capacity

IV. Analysis of outcomes and lessons learned

16. This chapter outlines the benefits and added value of working with others to deliver the best possible outcomes for children, based on examples drawn from the reviews, evaluations, interviews and consultations conducted for this framework. It also looks into what UNICEF contributes to partnerships as well as lessons learned.

A. The added value of partnerships and collaborative relationships to achieve better results for children

17. Partnerships and collaborative relationships are delivering critical benefits to children. They often combine actors with complementary mandates, skills, resources and perspectives and thereby lead to improved outcomes and enhanced ownership of the parties involved. They also contribute to the provision of global public goods that are not adequately provided by others and strengthen the implementation of global conventions. More specifically, partnerships and collaborative relationships provide, among other benefits, those described below.

18. **Stronger advocacy for children's rights.** Partnerships and collaborative relationships mobilize actors to catalyse policy change at global, regional and country levels. The participation of CSOs, women and youth generate broader support for specific issues and thereby increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of advocacy campaigns. CSOs were instrumental in bringing about the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the country level, children's rights coalitions advocate actively for Governments to improve the implementation of the Convention and to accede to its Optional Protocols. The advocacy of UNICEF and its National Committees and of civil society has contributed, for instance, to the decision of Governments to lift general reservations to the Convention. Partnerships and collaborative relationships can also have important effects on the lives of children by raising awareness about priority issues such as sexual exploitation. Following international conferences and awareness campaigns, many tourism companies signed a Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism and now conduct related training for their staff.

19. **Transformative potential.** When CSOs and corporate partners get involved in the delivery of social services, they can make a considerable contribution to the development and transformation of societies. Primary school enrolment rates among indigenous children in southern Mexico, for example, increased when UNICEF facilitated the participation of local business partners and NGOs in a campaign to identify all out-of-school children, to analyse the main causes such as lack of transport, and to develop solutions for those challenges. The programme has strengthened the opportunities for participation of indigenous groups.

20. **Greater aid effectiveness.** Donors and developing countries have committed themselves to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action to enhance the effectiveness of their cooperation. UNICEF shares this commitment. The Accra Agenda for Action recognizes that aid is about building partnerships for development but acknowledges that the rapid growth in the number of partnerships creates management and coordination challenges. UNICEF work with others contributes to addressing these challenges.

- The Accra Agenda for Action calls for donors to deepen their engagement with civil society. Through its longstanding experience in working with CSOs, UNICEF contributes substantially to the implementation of this goal.

- GPPs include the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, which developed the Global Malaria Action Plan around which partners can structure their interventions. The Measles Initiative, which involves UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Foundation, the American Red Cross, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, contributed to reducing the number of deaths due to measles in Africa by 90 per cent between 2000 and 2007. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) addresses this concern by facilitating coordination and agreement on a division of labour among multiple actors working in similar fields. While UNAIDS has facilitated a new global approach to AIDS, UNICEF as a cosponsor ensures that the impact of the epidemic on children is recognized and addressed. Another example is humanitarian reform, which provides opportunities for greater coherence among agencies. This approach is being implemented through relevant inter-agency processes, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster approach, where appropriate. The cluster approach assigns United Nations agencies and non-United Nations organizations as cluster leads for 11 critical areas of humanitarian action. UNICEF is lead agency for nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene, and co-lead for emergency telecommunications and education.

21. **Innovations for children.** Partnerships and collaborative relationships often contribute to the introduction of innovative approaches to programming. The NGO Tostan, working in Senegal and other African countries, for example, developed a new way to end female genital mutilation/cutting in which entire communities publicly abandon the practice. This approach has been supported by UNICEF and was adopted as a model by many United Nations agencies. Engagement with business partners often leads to new products that can substantially improve children's survival and development opportunities. In the context of the Flour Fortification Initiative, the Micronutrient Initiative and the Network for Sustained Elimination of Iodine Deficiency, UNICEF has been working with food producers to fight iodine and iron deficiencies through salt iodization and the fortification of staple foods. As a result of UNICEF collaboration with a private donor and a local company, a production facility for Plumpy'nut® was established in Ethiopia, increasing the speed in supplying this ready-to-use therapeutic food. Cell phones and SMS text messages are used to monitor and track supplies of Plumpy'nut, allowing child nutrition needs to be met more effectively.

22. **Strengthened knowledge base.** Another crucial area for partnerships and collaborative relationships is the exchange of knowledge and expertise around children's issues. The Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice, for instance, has developed an official global estimate on the number of children in prisons and has created a training manual for practitioners. Universities and think tanks contribute knowledge and research capacities to generate relevant data and support the identification of child-friendly policies and effective problem-solving mechanisms.

The Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities,[8] for example, involves a global network of experts, as well as national researchers.

23. **Additional resources for children a d UNICEF-supported programmes.** Partnerships and collaborative relationships also play an important role in attracting financial and other resources for children by influencing the decisions of Governments regarding allocation, mobilizing additional resources from foundations and the corporate sector, and creating innovative financing mechanisms such as the International Finance Facility for Immunisation. The corporate sector is a crucial partner for UNICEF in terms of mobilizing resources. In 2007, for example, business partners and corporate foundations made financial contributions to UNICEF programmes totalling $117 million. Moreover, many corporations leverage their relationships with customers and employees to support UNICEF fundraising efforts. This includes, for example, the Change for Good® and the Check Out for Children® programmes, as well as the sale of UNICEF greeting cards. Increasingly, non-public actors also provide in-kind assistance such as logistics services, marketing and technical expertise, and volunteer staff time.[9]

B. UNICEF contributions to partnerships and collaborative relationships

24. UNICEF plays important roles in its partnerships. According to the Corporate Survey, UNICEF is a preferred partner for business actors because of its strong brand and clear mission, its global presence and its technical expertise. The CSO Review found that civil society partners also value the reputation of UNICEF, its focus on children's rights, and its close access to Governments. By creating spaces for public dialogue and collective action among CSOs, UNICEF strengthens the transformative potential of CSOs within society at large. GPPs often seek to involve UNICEF because they appreciate the organization's credibility in working with women and youth as well as its convening power and its analytical, financial and operational strengths. The specific benefits UNICEF brings to partnerships and collaborative relationships are described below.

25. **Convening power.** UNICEF plays an important role by convening public and non-public stakeholders around children's issues, both at global and regional, and at local, levels. UNICEF acts, for example, as a formal host for several GPPs, such as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, and the organization chairs the Board of Directors of the Micronutrient Initiative. UNICEF also mobilizes women, youth or other sections of society and provides platforms for the articulation of their issues. Through the Voices of Youth website, for example, young people exchange opinions and channel them into policy processes. MTV Latin America and UNICEF jointly produced the video "Xpress", in which young people and celebrities talk about issues such as violence and poverty.

26. **Global reach and country presence.** A critical comparative advantage of the organization is its global reach and strong country presence, which makes it a

[8] The Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities aims at supporting evidence-based decision-making by analysing the effects of policy interventions on the situation of children. Around 50 countries are currently participating in the study.

[9] The provision of in-kind assistance is regulated in CF/EXD/2004-12 of 7 July 2004.

partner of choice. In GPPs, for example, other members often do not have such strong capacity on the ground. This capacity enables UNICEF to foster greater alignment between global initiatives and national development strategies and to act as a conduit between local and national actors and global policymaking processes.

27. **Technical expertise and efficient procurement.** UNICEF has the capacity to leverage the strategic and allocative priorities of global programme funds, donors and governments in favour of child-related outcomes. Together with WHO, UNICEF was instrumental in developing the Global Immunization Vision and Strategy, which in turn provides GAVI (the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization) with a framework to guide its vaccine introduction programmes. UNICEF also uses its expertise to support countries in preparing high-quality funding proposals submitted to global funds. Moreover, UNICEF works with CSOs such as Mothers2Mothers to ensure that theses organizations are informed about and conform to relevant professional standards, such as maternal and child health care practices. Many partnerships including, for example, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, rely on the effective and efficient procurement functions of UNICEF.

28. **Capacity-building.** Many CSOs benefit from UNICEF involvement, as this enhances their capacity to advocate for children's rights and to achieve results for children. At times, UNICEF also explicitly supports capacity-building exercises. In the CSO Review, 42 per cent of UNICEF CSO partners indicated that their technical capacity had improved as a result of the partnership. By building the capacity of local and national civil society, UNICEF contributes directly to the development of societies that recognize and promote the rights of children. Many CSOs expect UNICEF to further expand its contribution to capacity-building.

29. **Making innovations accessible.** UNICEF also plays an important role in identifying and scaling up the delivery of innovative life-saving interventions. This led, for example, to the mass distribution of oral rehydration salts to treat diarrhoeal diseases. Moreover, UNICEF aims to ensure that new technologies are 'open-source' so they can be locally adapted and customized. Graduate students from Columbia University, for example, jointly with UNICEF, developed RapidSMS, a system that uses basic mobile phones and SMS text messages to collect quality data from field locations. UNICEF supports the use of RapidSMS in Malawi as an early warning famine detection system, monitoring undernutrition in children under five years of age.

30. **Catalysing behaviour and policy change.** UNICEF collaborates with business partners to enhance corporate social responsibility relating to children. One example is the UNICEF contribution to the development of the FTSE4Good Index criteria. Civil society partners stress that UNICEF makes a crucial difference by advocating for the development of policies and mechanisms that protect children's rights and by raising public awareness around children's issues. Partnerships involving UNICEF have, for example, facilitated juvenile justice system reforms in several countries.

31. **Financial support.** Many partnerships and partner organizations benefit from UNICEF financial support. Through Project Cooperation Agreements with CSOs, UNICEF provides financial resources needed for project implementation, while its partners make tangible financial or non-financial contributions to the partnership. Using small-scale funding support agreements, UNICEF can make financial contributions of up to $10,000 under reduced administrative requirements.

C. Findings and lessons learned

32. The analysis conducted for this strategic framework highlights that partnerships and collaborative relationships are critical to ensuring effective and sustainable outcomes for children and will likely continue to grow in importance. All levels of the organization are involved in partnerships and collaborative relationships, including country offices, National Committees, regional offices and headquarters. Partnership activities are strongly integrated into UNICEF main planning mechanisms and operational procedures. At the global level, UNICEF engagement in partnerships and collaborative relationships is supported by several divisions, including Private Fundraising and Partnerships, Programmes, Policy and Practice, the Office of Emergency Programmes, and Supply. To improve risk management and strengthen organization-wide coherence, UNICEF has developed several guidance documents that spell out criteria for partner selection and capacity assessment and define different forms of engagement.

33. Despite these investments and the impressive results achieved, UNICEF faces important challenges that include the following:

- Many engagements remain ad hoc in nature and UNICEF lacks an organization-wide and coherent understanding of what partnerships and collaborative relationships are, what value they can add to the realization of children's rights, and which form of cooperation is most appropriate under which circumstances.
- Consultations with business and CSO partners, as well as interviews conducted for the evaluation of UNICEF engagement in GPPs, identified the administrative burden as one of the most important hurdles in working with UNICEF.
- The approach of UNICEF to partnerships and collaborative relationships is not always coherent across country offices, National Committees, regional offices and headquarters. Partners have pointed to the need for UNICEF to improve communications and organizational modalities of engagement.
- UNICEF lacks specialized monitoring and evaluation tools for partnerships and collaborative relationships.
- UNICEF current guidelines and processes for dealing with the potential reputational risk involved in working with others embody a risk-averse, rather than a risk-aware, approach.
- Partnerships and collaborative relationships typically entail transaction costs, primarily in terms of staff time, and require special skills and expertise. These costs need to be balanced against the expected benefits. UNICEF does not often enough factor these benefits into such investments, and as a consequence, at times lacks adequate capacity to engage effectively.

34. The main challenges seen in relation to the different groups of partners and types of partnerships include the following:

- GPPs are often conceived as a targeted response to a global challenge requiring collective action to achieve results. However, the insufficient integration of global programmes and initiatives into partner countries' broader

development agendas remains a challenge. Through its engagement in GPPs, UNICEF aims to strengthen the commitment of these instruments to supporting country ownership, to aligning and harmonizing their assistance proactively, and to making good use of mutual accountability frameworks, while continuing the emphasis on achieving results for children.

- In its cooperation with CSOs, UNICEF needs a better understanding of civil society and its complexities, as well as of the appropriate modalities for engagement. Due to its traditional technical focus on delivering services for children, UNICEF still too often sees CSOs as mere contractors and implementing agents, rather than as genuine partners. CSO partners also point out that UNICEF does not provide sufficient resources for their capacity development and that the strong working relationships UNICEF maintains with Governments at times may hinder a more active engagement with civil society.

- Business partners offer an important potential for partnerships and collaborative relationships beyond resource mobilization, which remains underexplored by UNICEF.

- When working with knowledge partners and the media, UNICEF is still too often adopting a contractual approach, which leaves a large potential of knowledge, innovative capacity and outreach untapped.

V. Recommendations

A. Vision

35. **Partnerships and collaborative relationships are the way of doing business.** It has become clear that the UNICEF cooperative approach has enabled much better results for children than UNICEF could have achieved on its own. Fully embracing partnerships and collaborative relationships as the way of doing business, however, entails a transformation of the internal mindset of UNICEF. UNICEF staff needs to acknowledge other organizations as genuine partners operating at eye level in the pursuit of common goals, rather than as mere contractors, implementing agents or sponsors. This shift will require strong leadership and clear articulation and communication of the value added by partnerships and collaborative relationships. The shift will also enhance the organization's capacity to collaborate in the spirit of genuine partnership, to adopt a strategic approach to partnerships and collaborative relationships, to explore their full potential and to harness their innovative and transformative power for children. Such a shift will make the organization fit for a changing world and help to achieve better results for children.

36. **Objectives for partnerships and collaborative relationships.** The objectives of UNICEF partnerships and collaborative relationships are to contribute to the realization of children's rights, support efforts to meet the basic needs of children, help to expand children's opportunities to reach their full potential, and to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions for children. In order to achieve these objectives, UNICEF engagement in partnerships and collaborative relationships aims to foster a child-focused development agenda and to build the

capacity of partners and societies to execute effective and efficient social policies for children.

B. The way forward

37. To achieve this vision, UNICEF will pursue a way forward, the elements of which are described below, in its work with different partners and in its choice of the appropriate engagement modality.

38. **Increase the use of informal collaborative relationships.** Partnerships should have mutually agreed goals and objectives and define clear roles and responsibilities. This does not imply, however, that all relationships need to be formalized or institutionalized. Where no funds or other resources are transferred, an informal collaboration may be more effective and efficient. In future relations, UNICEF will choose and promote the form of cooperation that is most appropriate to the goals pursued and the risks involved, and recognize the value of informal relationships. This cooperation can include co-developing strategies to solve concrete challenges for children, bringing different parties together to ensure action, facilitating the development of innovations for children, and so on. When deciding on its role and modalities of engagement, UNICEF will seek to capitalize on its comparative advantages. Depending on the circumstances, UNICEF will act as a convener or facilitator, provide normative leadership, catalyse policy and behaviour change, and/or work to strengthen the capacity of its partners.

39. **Develop a more strategic approach to its engagement in GPPs.** To maximize the positive impact of its engagement in GPPs, UNICEF will take the following approaches:

- In the years ahead, UNICEF will need to strengthen its ability to leverage a global aid architecture that has two main pillars of approach: one based on a country focus and the other driven by global issues. In order to play such a role, UNICEF will need to manage its involvement in GPPs as systematically as it does its country programmes of cooperation with Governments. This effort will require a strategic approach to deciding which GPPs to engage in, and at what level of intensity.
- UNICEF will work for the right balance among the priorities of staying engaged in a wide range of child-related issues, maintaining a strategic focus in managing its GPP portfolio, and allocating optimal human and financial resources to chosen GPPs. Decisions can be made only on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the global role and reputation of UNICEF as well as donor preferences.
- UNICEF needs to fully integrate the national and international dimensions of its engagement in GPPs. For this purpose, UNICEF will make greater use of its strong relationships with other global actors, including Governments, in order to seek greater alignment of GPPs with national development strategies.

40. **Develop stronger partnerships with CSOs.** To this end, UNICEF will become more strategic in its cooperation by emphasizing the following strategies:

- Foster a common understanding of civil society and its constituencies within UNICEF, and develop a database and an internal information management

system for CSO partnerships. UNICEF will also address administrative hurdles and refine the governance modalities for CSO partnerships.

- Strive to work in more genuine partnership with CSOs by engaging them at the national, regional and global levels more closely in policy and programme development, implementation and review, and in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as by acknowledging the contribution of all partners to achieved outcomes.

- Increase collaboration with various civil society actors, especially children, young people and community-based organizations.

41. **Utilize the full potential, while managing the risks, of business partnerships and collaborative relationships.** By strengthening its private sector partnerships, UNICEF will be able to mobilize additional resources, including new funding, technology to provide undersupplied global public goods and cutting-edge knowledge. The implementation of UNICEF country programmes of cooperation can be strengthened by involving business in national development processes. Business partnerships can also act as catalysts for institutional innovation within UNICEF. There can be, however, risks attached to engagement with the corporate sector, such as a reputational risk. UNICEF needs to make sure that it does not compromise its most important asset: its reputation and moral authority. Other challenges are related to companies' public relations activities, expectation management, and the risk of being seen to endorse particular companies and products. To benefit from the wider engagements, UNICEF has identified potential areas for increased cooperation and has explored the interest of business partners in this regard, based on a risk management approach. For its future engagement with the corporate sector, UNICEF will strengthen cooperation not only with large corporations, but also with smaller and local business actors, and will take the following approaches:

- Strengthen the focus on promoting corporate social responsibility by influencing the behaviour and practice of the private sector. This includes, for example, the joint development of child- and family-friendly workplace policies, community outreach programmes and supply-chain management strategies, not least in the area of preventing child labour. UNICEF is offering its expertise in child rights to companies and business associations. Training of staff at headquarters, country offices and National Committees will be strengthened.

- Define priorities and further explore the opportunities to enhance (a) the co-development of strategic partnerships, with jointly defined programmes drawing on the core competencies of partners; (b) the co-creation of solutions to specific bottlenecks, in programme implementation, supply and advocacy; (c) the facilitation and brokering of joint activities, with the corporate sector and with communities, NGOs and/or Governments, including policy formulation; (d) corporate investment in innovations for children; (e) corporate contributions to the development of UNICEF institutional capacity, through training, for example; and (f) the facilitation of corporate investment in programme delivery for children at the country level.

- Proactively pursue wider resource mobilization partnerships. In addition to financial resources, seek to increase non-financial business contributions, such

as products, services, technical expertise and know-how, market outreach, logistics and staff capacities.

- In response to concerns expressed by corporate partners regarding its administrative procedures, UNICEF will review these processes and remove prevailing hurdles.
- To mitigate the reputational risk attached to new forms of engagement, UNICEF will develop adjusted selection criteria, customized to the respective levels of risk, depending on the particular form of engagement.

42. **Strengthen cooperation with knowledge partners and the media.** To enhance its role as a knowledge institution and promote innovations for children, UNICEF will take the following approaches:

- Develop more and stronger partnerships and collaborative relationships with knowledge institutions, with the aim of contributing to setting research agendas, promoting joint knowledge production, strengthening the shared use of data, and enhancing debate and mutual dissemination
- Use its catalytic power to promote the collaborative development of innovative solutions to strengthen service delivery for children in developing countries.
- Enhance the use of open-source technology in its work with partners.
- Further explore and develop the potential of Internet-based forms of social networking.

C. Agenda for action

43. UNICEF will develop guidelines for the different modes of engagement, outlining goals, responsibilities, accountabilities and criteria for the level and modality of engagement. UNICEF will prepare necessary changes in order to become more strategic in its approach to partnerships and collaborative relationships, to create greater organizational coherence, and to remain a partner of choice for child-rights focused CSOs, socially responsible corporations, related multilateral organizations and others. The ongoing organizational improvement initiatives already address several of these changes, for example, in the area of updating UNICEF business processes. In moving forward, UNICEF will focus on the following areas:

- Revision of business processes to reduce their administrative burden.
- Creation of tools and guidance for the development and management of partnerships and collaborative relationships.
- Building of organizational capacity and strengthening of internal structures for partnerships and collaborative relationships, including providing training on effective ways of working with others.
- Strengthening of information management and creation of a more solid knowledge base.
- Improvement of external communications.

Additional information on the internal plan for action is being provided separately, for information, to the Executive Board.

D. Guiding principles for partnerships and collaborative relationships

44. UNICEF partnerships and collaborative relationships with non-public actors, including CSOs and business partners in the corporate sector, as well as UNICEF engagement in GPPs, will adhere to the following guiding principles elaborated below.

45. **Focus on delivering results for children and promoting child rights.** UNICEF will engage in partnerships and collaborative relationships that provide a clearly defined added value to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and UNICEF strategic priorities as outlined in the MTSP and workplans.

46. **Partner selection criteria.** UNICEF will partner with organizations and entities committed to the core values of UNICEF, the United Nations, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in conformity with the principles of good governance, including transparency, accountability and sound financial management. UNICEF will also bring specific skills, resources and abilities to the partnerships or collaborative relationships that complement UNICEF core competencies and are best suited to the relevant programme environment at the local, national, regional and global levels. UNICEF will not formally partner with organizations or other entities in breach of core United Nations norms, including with entities involved or complicit in the violation of human rights and those posing serious risks to the reputation of UNICEF. Potential new partnerships shall be subject to a vetting process and UNICEF shall consider the implications of new engagements for the different parts of the organization, including National Committees. Existing vetting criteria and the vetting process for civil society partners will be reviewed and strengthened.

47. **Alignment and ownership.** The activities of partnerships and collaborative relationships involving UNICEF should be aligned with and complement harmonized donor policies and national development plans and should help to achieve sustainable development and foster national and local ownership and capacity-building to realize children's rights.

48. **Transparency and equity.** The objectives and activities of partnerships and collaborative relationships should be fully transparent and involve mutual contributions as well as shared risks and benefits for all partners.

49. **Integrity and independence.** Partnerships and collaborative relationships shall maintain the integrity and independence of UNICEF and protect the organization's brand.

50. **Cost-effectiveness.** Partnerships should seek to minimize the administrative and financial burden they impose on UNICEF and its partners.

51. **Form of cooperation.** In its relations with others, UNICEF will choose and promote the form of cooperation that is most appropriate to the goals pursued, either

a formal partnership or a collaborative relationship. If collaboration involves the transfer of funds or other resources, a written, legally enforceable agreement is required under UNICEF procedures.

Operational guidelines for formal partnerships

52. In order to maximize benefits for children, make proper use of the opportunities, and manage the risks inherent in partnering, UNICEF decisions on when and how to engage in formal partnerships are based on the following guidelines.

53. **Agreements.** Formal partnerships shall be based on explicit, written agreements through which partners will jointly define their expected contributions, roles and responsibilities, based on an analysis of each partner's core competencies and accountabilities; and shall agree on clear objectives, operational targets and activities, and monitoring and evaluation procedures.

54. **Regular review, monitoring and evaluation.** UNICEF and its partners will agree on reporting, monitoring and evaluation arrangements to ensure continuous improvement and the ongoing relevance and quality of activities.

55. **Conformity to existing rules and guidelines.** In all its partnership engagements, UNICEF will apply its rules and guidelines, as well as those of the United Nations.[10]

56. **Exit strategy.** The agreement between UNICEF and its partners will include a statement of the intended duration of the partnership and, where appropriate, under which conditions it would not be continued.

57. **Discontinuation of partnerships.** UNICEF shall discontinue its participation in a partnership if the alliance makes little or no progress towards achieving its objectives and if it or one of its participants violates any of the guiding principles and operational guidelines listed above.

E. Monitoring and evaluation

58. Adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are a critical basis for a more strategic approach to partnerships and collaborative relationships. Currently, UNICEF monitors and evaluates partnerships and collaborative relationships as part of its regular programme activities. Country offices include partnerships in their

[10] Guidelines for partnerships and collaborative relationships with business partners: "UNICEF Guidelines and Manual for Working with the Business Community" (2001, currently under revision) and "Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Community" (2000, currently under revision). Guidelines for partnerships and collaborative relationships with CSOs: "Guidance for Collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations and Community-Based Organizations in Country Programmes of Cooperation" (2005). Guidelines for partnerships and collaborative relationships in the humanitarian sector: Global Humanitarian Platform (2007) "Principles for Partnership" (2007); "Guiding Principles for Public-Private Collaboration for Humanitarian Action" (World Economic Forum and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2007); and "Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies" (UNICEF, 2005). In reporting about their activities, partners should adhere to UNICEF standards for media and the use of images, especially the "Guidelines for Ethical Reporting on Children" and the "Photography Guidelines".

annual work plans, results matrices and annual reports. Key performance indicators defined in the organization's MTSP also measure results achieved by UNICEF and its partners. However, this practice does not distinguish between results accomplished by UNICEF through its engagement and those achieved as a result of the partnership. UNICEF needs to be better at judging the effectiveness and efficiency of its engagement in partnerships and collaborative relationships, and its costs and their benefits. However, it is not always possible, or desirable, to expect attributable results from partnerships. Such an expectation may lead to less-effective collaboration. The use of monitoring and evaluation tools should therefore be assessed on a case-by-case basis and be adapted to the type of partnership.

59. UNICEF will develop a set of tools to monitor and evaluate its evolving partnership engagements. These tools will incorporate international best practices[11] and will include partner organizations in the design and implementation. The tools will enable UNICEF to assess costs as well as results, including the programmatic contribution of partnerships and collaborative relationships as seen by beneficiaries, as well as process results, such as mutual learning or coordination outcomes. If possible, the tools will also indicate to which extent UNICEF engagement in partnerships or collaborative relationships has contributed to the results. The tools will strengthen the UNICEF risk management approach, designed to address risks, while encouraging innovation and reducing the bureaucratic burden.

60. Based on these monitoring and evaluation tools, UNICEF will conduct a thorough analysis of various types of engagement. The organization will trace and assess the evolving engagement of UNICEF over the life cycle of partnerships and collaborative relationships, identify what works best and provide the basis for improving partnerships and collaborative relationships or UNICEF engagement in them. UNICEF will develop a database of case studies and disseminate findings to partners and identify specific lessons for each partner. Monitoring and evaluation processes will be complemented with regular randomized client surveys among major partner organizations to support UNICEF in the continuous improvement of its own partnership performance.

[11] The following documents are indicative of emerging international good practice in monitoring and evaluating partnerships: "Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs" (World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, 2008); "Evaluation & Development: The Partnership Dimension" (Liebenthal, Feinstein, Ingram, eds., 2004); "Evaluating the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Partnerships Involving Governments from OECD Member Countries" (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008); "Partnering for Results. Assessing the Impact of Inter-Sectoral Partnering" (Charles and McNulty, 1999); "Assessing Strategic Partnership. The Partnership Assessment Tool" (Hardy, Hudson, Waddington, 2003); "Assessing Partnership Performance: Understanding the Drivers for Success" (Caplan, Gomme, Mugabi, Stott, 2007).

VI. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Endorses the "UNICEF strategic framework for partnerships and collaborative relationships", presented in document E/ICEF/2009/10, as the strategic framework for the engagement of UNICEF in partnerships and collaborative relationships to achieve results for children.